

TENNESSEE ADDS 'PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES' TO DIVERSITY PURCHASING PROGRAM

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- The Governor's Office of Diversity Business Enterprise (GoDBE) for the State of Tennessee has added "persons with disabilities" as a new category for support under the state's diversity purchasing program.

GoDBE is the state office responsible for attracting and assisting minority-owned, women-owned, service-disabled-veteran-owned and small businesses interested in participating in State of Tennessee procurement and contracting activities. Adding the new category means that any business owned by a person with a physician-verified disability will now be eligible for support by GoDBE, said Shelia J. Simpson, the program's director.

"We help our eligible companies develop into successful, viable businesses by assisting them in competing successfully for state contracts," Simpson said. "We've seen over the years that becoming a contractor for the State of Tennessee can help businesses build confidence and skills that are useful in other competitive procurements.

"Also, winning state contracts often helps companies secure additional business from the private sector, since a state contract is widely seen as a vote of confidence in a company's stability and in the quality of the goods and services it provides," she said.

Assistance offered by GoDBE to eligible companies includes procurement technical assistance, explanations of rules and regulations governing state procurements, and aid in completing applications and forms used in the certification vetting process.

Simpson added that GoDBE also helps other state agencies reach their internal goals for participation in contracts with diversity businesses.

"We are pleased that the Tennessee General Assembly has authorized this expansion of the GoDBE program," said Bob Oglesby, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of General Services, which includes the state's Central Procurement Office and the GoDBE program. "Broadening the number of qualified vendors who can do business with the state increases purchasing options for our departments and agencies, which is good for helping state government manage costs, and at the same time it strengthens participating companies and thus the larger economy."

GoDBE has consulted with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development on how to reach and expand opportunities for businesses owned by persons with disabilities.

"I am proud that our department had the opportunity to participate on a task force that promotes workforce and economic inclusion for business owners with disabilities," said Bob Rolfe,

commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. “By adding this new category to the state’s diversity purchasing program, we hope to expand the reach of Tennessee companies with whom we can work and look forward to building strong partnerships with these businesses in the future.”

As of December 2017, GoDBE recorded \$491,296,494 in diversity spending since its creation by executive order in 2003.

Information about registering to participate in GoDBE is available at <https://www.tn.gov/generalservices/procurement/central-procurement-office--cpo-/governor-s-office-of-diversity-business-enterprise--godbe--.html>.

For additional questions, contact Simpson at Shelia.j.simpson@tn.gov or 615-253-4634.